

THE REINCARNATION OF JAIME  
BROWN

By Lynne Alvarez

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**The Susan Gurman Agency, LLC**

a theatrical literary agency

1501 Broadway, 30<sup>th</sup> floor, NY NY 10036  
tel 212-749 4618 fax 212-864 5055

[www.gurmanagency.com](http://www.gurmanagency.com)

## ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

*The Reincarnation of Jaime Brown* was first presented through the New Plays Program at American Conservatory Theater (Carey Perloff, Artistic Director), San Francisco, California. It was directed by Craig Slight; costumes by Allie Floor; lighting by Kelly Roberson; music composed by Lois Cantor, and Richard Taybe was the assistant director. The cast was as follows:

Jaime Brown.....	Stephanie Potts
Jimmy.....	Mike Merola
David Baldwin.....	Ryan Kennedy
San Bot Lhu (Sammy).....	Sarah Hayon
Hudan Bot Lhu (Hughie).....	Uri Horovitz
Tina, Marie, Joyce.....	Christianne Hauber
Boris.....	Brad Clard
Wilson Meredith.....	Jack Sharrar

## CHARACTERS

*In order of appearance:*

JAIME BROWN, nineteen years old, street poet

JIMMY (James Hobarth III), nineteen years old, juggler, or other street performer, educated at Princeton

DAVID BALDWIN, twenty-three years old, singer, composer

SAMMY (San Bot Lhu), any age, all ages, expert in reincarnation, played by a woman, but appears as a man until the end

HUGHIE (Hudan Bot Lhu), as above, but a man, dressed identically to Sammy, always speaks in questions

MARIE, twenty, from Brooklyn, intermittent girlfriend of David's

JOYCE, twenty, Wilson's onetime date

BORIS (The Butler), twenties-thirties, strapping, handsome, blond Russian

TINA, forties, the Polish maid, Boris's wife

WILSON MEREDITH, late sixties, tycoon, literal, but cultured

*All bits and crowd scenes should be played by cast members who are not in the immediate scene. No effort should be made to hide this fact. The same actress plays Tina, Marie, and Joyce.*

**PLACE**

All action takes place in the present at:

Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City

Jaime's Apartment

Wilson's Estate

The Beach

Kennedy Airport

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## ACT I

*Jaime Brown enters in black. She carries a paper cup of coffee and wears a derby. She has obviously just awakened. Port Authority Bus Terminal takes shape around her. People wander by, pillars come down (obviously made of cardboard). They descend unevenly. One lands on a passerby who yelps and is extracted by two other people. Jaime dodges one.*

JAIME: Construction in New York's a bitch. (*She passes a donut stand, hands the vendor a sheet of paper, and grabs a donut. He starts to protest.*) Don't sweat it, man—in a couple years that'll be worth a fortune. I sign all my copies. A small investment now could set you up for life, you know what I mean? (*People pass, she tries to sell them a poem.*) You want a poem, Miss...uh you there, Miss, how about a poem? Thanks a lot. And you sir...a poem, an adventure—  
(*The man stops and looks her up and down lasciviously. Opens his raincoat and flashes Jaime. Jaime confronts him. As she walks forward, he walks back until at some point he turns and flees.*)  
not that kind of adventure, man, but thanks for sharing.  
I be you and I are thinking a lot of the same things right now.  
I'm out here selling poetry, but you're walking around naked under that raincoat with the same question burning between your...ah...ears.  
“What's happened to poetry in America?”  
Am I right?  
I mean when was the last time a poem rattled your bones?  
Well here I am to remedy that.  
Cast off, blast off  
I'm the new wave poetry slave  
I know what you're thinking—you have to study Elizabethan English to read poetry; you have to buy an arcane insane esoteric totally prosaic literary magazine available in only one bookstore on 47<sup>th</sup> street twice a year—am I correct?  
Or you feel to hear a good poem you have to kneel at the knees of some MMP—Major Male Poet preferably facing his crotch.  
Now tell me if that isn't true? Sad isn't it?  
Well I say, no way  
I give you your poetry straight  
no rap, no rock, bee bop or hip hop

So how about five dollars, man?  
You can afford it. Think of what you must save on clothes.

*(The Flasher turns and runs.)*

Yes, yes, yes

I'm the new wave poetry slave  
the last living purist in America—

*(David walks by with an instrument case. She looks him over.)*

Well maybe I'm not all that pure,

Hey you—superdude.

Yeah you. What's up? *(She follows him.)*

You want a poem? A touch of culture, a touch of class

Love 'em and leave 'em right?

I have something just for you...

A road poem, a heartbreak poem, lonesome sexy blues.

DAVID: Are you trying to pick my pocket?

JAIME: Dude, those jeans are so tight

no one could pick your pocket without a surgical instrument.

Looks good though. Don't get me wrong.

Now, how about a poem?

I'm in a difficult profession here.

I'm a major if undiscovered poet

reduced to selling original works of art on the street.

I have hundreds of poems ready-made—for all occasions,  
every mood, theory, relationship and philosophy of life.

Only two dollars. Five dollars will get you

an original, custom-composed on the spot, stirring, moving unique

work of art and for only one dollar—and this is an introductory

offer. I can write you a limerick as effective as a quick kick in

the butt.

What do you say?

DAVID: Sorry, kid.

JAIME: Signed. Dated, limited copy.

Think of it as an investment.

Or if you like, you can pass it off as your own.

You take the credit, I'll take the cash.

No problem.

DAVID: You're broke. *(He hands her a dollar.)*

JAIME: Totally.

But this isn't charity.

You get your limerick.

Now—who's this for? Sweetheart, mother, boss. The judge that let  
you off the hook, what?

DAVID: A girlfriend.

JAIME: Figures.

Her name?

DAVID: Marie.

JAIME: Catholic, round collars, flat shoes.

DAVID: Not quite.

JAIME: Okay. Forget it.

Marie...Marie...

Romantic, raucous, rancorous or vindictive?

I have a great vocabulary.

What mood do you want? I'm talking tone here.

DAVID: Romantic.

JAIME: Dirty or clean?

DAVID: Jesus.

JAIME: Okay, clean. Got it.

Where's she from?

DAVID: I have to meet her bus, all right?

JAIME: If I were making a suit, I'd take your measurements correct?

DAVID: She's from Arkansas.

JAIME: Nobody's from Arkansas...

Okay, Arkansas, the dude wants a rhyme for  
Arkansas...

Arkansas (*She's writing.*)

I like a challenge.

All right.

DAVID: Shoot.

JAIME: I'll read it for free, but it's 50 cents if you want a copy.

DAVID: (*Hands her 2 quarters.*) Go buy an airplane.

How long've you been doing this?

JAIME: Eight months. (*Reads.*)

There's a sweet young thing  
named Marie...

DAVID: Must be tough.

JAIME: No problem. (*Starts to read again.*)

There's a sweet young thing named Marie

Who I'm just dying to see...

DAVID: Have you ever thought of taking on a regular job?

JAIME: What are you talking about? I could get a steady job any day, but I believe you are what you do, okay?

If I'm waitressing and waiting to be a poet—then I'm a waitress waiting to be a poet. Simple, I cut the waiting.

Now let me read the damn thing, so I can get on with this.

There's a sweet young thing named Marie.

Who I'm just dying to see

She's got what it takes

So I don't need no brakes

Cause Marie's just dying to "blank" me.

DAVID: Blank?

JAIME: As in fill in the blank...

I don't know you. So I couldn't tell how strong to make it...

so what do you want...hug, kiss, fuck?

Fill it in.

DAVID: You didn't use Arkansas.

JAIME: What do you want for a dollar?

*(Announcements of arrivals and departures.)*

DAVID: Here's five kid.

Keep the wolf away from the door.

JAIME: I got to give you a poem then. A real one. *(She finds one.)*

I personalize them.

What's your name?

DAVID: David.

JAIME: Hi. I'm Jaime Brown.

DAVID: Gotta go.

JAIME: Right.

You're a musician, right?

Guitar?

DAVID: Synthesizer. *(He exits.)*

JAIME: Musicians are cool.

*(A mugging is going on.)*

There must be a better way to make a living.

*(Jimmy walks by, also in black. Pale, thin. He carries a small bag. Stops nearby, opens his bag. Starts juggling. He puts a hat on the floor. The muggers come by. Stare and then throw him some money. The muggee comes by*

*and takes it out angrily. Sammy comes in wearing a suit, tie, etc. Watches Jimmy and throws in a coin. Jaime starts her routine.)*

JAIME: Okay, all right.

Poems for sale.

Poetry

the real thing

right from me.

Choose the topic, choose the tone

Buy a poem

that's all your own.

No rap, no haiku.

*(Sammy watches standing close, peering.)*

Look buster, if you don't want a poem, move on.

Okay?

SAMMY: You have a mole on your face.

JAIME: Mole! What mole? That's a beauty mark.

Get lost.

SAMMY: Are you an orphan?

JAIME: Look. I'm not a runaway. Okay? Or a crook, or a hooker.

There's no poster out on me no photo on a milk carton, got it?

SAMMY: I'd like a poem.

JAIME: Two dollars ready-made and five bucks made-to-order.

SAMMY: What do you have already made up?

JAIME: I have hundreds of poems.

I mean I have everything—suicide to seashells.

I have lots of love poems. People usually want love poems.

Do you have any idea what you want?

SAMMY: What kind of love poems do you have?

JAIME: Let's see. Ecstatic, dramatic, trivial, passionate...

SAMMY: No other kind of love?

JAIME: Right. Weird.

I should have known. Look

I deal with heterosexual love.

If you want me to work it around a little

I'll have to charge you.

SAMMY: I see. No love of God, love of mankind, nature, beauty, truth, a rose  
and so on?

JAIME: Oh.

SAMMY: Yes?



JAIME: How about me writing you one on the spot.

SAMMY: Fine.

JAIME: Five dollars though.

SAMMY: Fine.

JAIME: You choose the topic, but I write what I want. And if it goes over 10 lines, there's an additional fee plus 50 cents for giving you a written copy.

SAMMY: Fine.

JAIME: So. You want one on love, right?

SAMMY: No.

JAIME: Okay.

What then?

SAMMY: (*Meaningfully.*) The number one.

JAIME: The number one.

As in one, two, three, four, five...?

SAMMY: Yes.

The number one.

(*Jimmy has stopped juggling and has come to watch.*)

JAIME: Half up front.

Don't wander off. This'll take a minute.

(*Sammy hands her the money. Jaime scribbles, Jimmy juggles.*)

JAIME: Okay. (*To Jimmy.*)

That beats it friend. Leave. I can't concentrate. Got it?

(*Jimmy shrugs and walks away still juggling.*)

Look, I have your poem Mr...

SAMMY: San Bot Lhu.

JAIME: Yeah. I personalize my work here. I put a dedication "to" and your name.

Now San Bot what?

SAMMY: Sammy, put Sammy.

JAIME: Great. (*Writes it in.*)

This is heavy. But I write what comes out, okay?

You ready?

SAMMY: (*Crosses his arms.*) Sure thing.

JAIME: (*Reads.*) To Sammy

One bears witness

disguised as the enemy

among us.

The burning stake

the bloody pike is his

the mother covering her  
child's eyes.  
One watches and remembers  
One is the tower and the well.  
the woman rocking in the street,  
One is the empty house, the empty pocket,  
the glass about to be filled.  
(*A moment of silence.*)

SAMMY: You don't look like you'd write a poem like that.

(*Takes the poem.*)

JIMMY: Appearances are deceiving.

JAIME: What do you know?!

JIMMY: You're not a bad poet.

SAMMY: Are you here every day?

JAIME: When the sun's out I'm in Central Park. Rain, snow, frost, hail—I'm  
here.

SAMMY: I see. (*Sammy exits.*)

JIMMY: Are you all right?

JAIME: I'm fine. Why?

JIMMY: That poem was pretty depressing.

JAIME: Sue me.

I've had a lousy life.

Don't just stand there. This isn't a freak show.

You make me nervous.

JIMMY: What?

JAIME: It's a big planet. Feel free to explore it.

JIMMY: We'd do better if we stuck together.

JAIME: No way.

JIMMY: (*Juggling.*) Who'd cross the street to buy a poem?

Really.

But juggling has high visibility.

(*Juggles high.*)

Get it?

Juggling draws a crowd.

Bingo. They see me, hear you,  
their hand's already in their pocket,  
voilà.

JAIME: It won't work now.

Business is lousy.